

(Jefferson County Journal) Few state agencies draw the ire of citizens as much as the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT). We curse the department as we sit in rush-hour traffic and we blame MoDOT officials for everything from poor snow removal to wasting taxpayer dollars.

When MoDOT spends money in the St. Louis area, the expenditure is criticized by rural Missourians. When the agency spends money in rural areas of the state, urban residents decry the move.

No matter what MoDOT does, it doesn't seem to draw any type of appreciation from the masses, which makes it all the more important to give the agency a pat on the back when it deserves it. Such is the case with the recently completed section of new Route MM.

Completed ahead of schedule and on budget, the \$7.2 million project is a testament to the grass-roots efforts of Jefferson County residents in conjunction with the efforts of local, state and federal politicians and, yes, even MoDOT.

Specifically, kudos should go out to Conrad Smith and the Route W/MM Task Force who lobbied for improvements to Route MM for years. Thanks also to Congressman Russ Carnahan who secured federal highway money for the project and to Fred Weber Construction, the general contractor, who completed the work. But the biggest pat on the back should be reserved for MoDOT.

It was MoDOT officials who took the time to listen to the concerns of residents and took to heart the need for improvements to Route MM. It was MoDOT officials who fought tooth and nail to secure some state funding for the project, and it was MoDOT engineers who designed the new roadway.

Sure, there will be those malcontents who say the project should have been done

years ago, but they are usually the same people who go out of their way to look for something to complain about. There will always be those people who think MoDOT can somehow magically pull millions of dollars out of thin air and build a major road project in a few months.

It wasn't too many years ago that MoDOT was considered by many to be a somewhat arrogant agency, and there are MoDOT employees who would agree with that assessment. But MoDOT has undergone an image makeover, a makeover where listening to citizen concerns is a priority, not an afterthought.

It is with that new spirit of cooperation that we hope MoDOT will continue to make improvements to MM and to put real safety issues on the fast track to resolution.

© Copyright 2006